

What are the most haunted places in Phoenix?

[“Halloween Bash”](#) - Scary glockenspiel with vintage sounds

Kaila: Welcome to Valley 101 -

Kaila and Katie together:: spoooooooooooooooooky edition!

Kaila: I'm your host, Kaila White.

Katie: And I'm head of audio Katie O'Connell.

Kaila: And this week we're looking at the most haunted places in Phoenix.

Katie: You'll hear about places where children still roam -

Kaila: (*laughing*) A graveyard...

Katie: And my personal favorite: Theater ghosts!

Kaila: And if you don't believe in ghosts, (*with Dracula accent*) that is nooooo the poiiiiiiiiint!

Katie: (improve an outro) So join us now, because we're headed into haunted territory.

Together: *Ominous laughter, then genuine laughter.*

[music fades out]

Kaila: We had one heck of a guide through haunted Phoenix.

Debe: [00:00:29] I am Debe Branning. I am an author and paranormal investigator.

Debe: [00:00:39] Well I worked for the MVD the motor vehicle department for about 25 years and there were a group of us at the office that was really interested in the paranormal. So we started going down to Douglas Arizona to The Gadsden Hotel on you know kind of a bi monthly basis and pretty soon there was a whole crew in our office that was interested and that's how the MVD ghost chasers came about. It was kind of just an office paranormal team thing.

Katie: But what started as “just an office” thing became very, very real. Debe has been the director of the MVD Ghostchasers paranormal team since 1994, and it was one of the first paranormal hunting teams in the Valley. She's written multiple books about haunted places in Arizona.

Kaila: Debe said she's not a medium. She doesn't have a special talent that alerts her to the presence of spirits.

Debe: [00:01:15] I do smell things and hear things and occasionally I see things but most of all it is just that feeling you get when you enter a room and you know something's different.

Katie: Debe said there are two kinds of energies. There's good energy ...

Debe: [00:03:31] You know it's never, never been terribly scary for us. We've always encountered spirits with a good nature. They've always been kind. [00:03:40][8.9]

Katie: And bad energy. Although Debe said she really hasn't encountered much or any of that.

Debe: You know it's never never been terribly scary for us. We've always encountered spirits with a good nature. They've always been kind. There's been a few times where you're startled for a moment. But me I've always looked at it as kind of like skydiving it's just that adventure. And at most the time when you're on the paranormal investigation it's like going on a boring fishing trip. You are sitting there all night waiting for something to happen or you know waiting to catch a fish. Nothing happens at all. And other nights it's like a sound there, footsteps there, you know chilling feeling or someone has seeing shadows someplace you never know you never know because you can't predict what the spirits want to do.

Kaila: So what are the places where you're most likely to get that sinking feeling in your stomach? Or that shiver down your spine? I tagged along on a ghost tour with Debe and local historian Marshall Shore, who you heard from in Maritza's episode on the "Trunk Murderess" Winnie Ruth Judd.

[["Evil Hogs"](#) begins - "Relaxed and slightly spooky, with rolling toms and haunted castle organ."]

Clip 1- 4:15 **Marshall:** Alright everyone I want to welcome you aboard the haunted phoenix tour! Wool! (crowd applause)

1: HOTEL SAN CARLOS

Debe: [00:07:16] Yeah the San Carlos Hotel is probably Phoenix's most well-known haunted place. It's in all the books all the TV shows
[00:07:26] [10.5]

[music fades out]

Katie: It opened in 1928 and, at the time, the hotel was rare for Phoenix in that it was a high rise and it had air conditioning *and* elevators. Hotel San Carlos attracted many celebrities, including Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe. This story happened just week after the hotel opened in 1928.

[Sad tones: "[Lurking beneath the surface](#)" and "[The Dark Angel](#)"]

Debe: [00:07:28] main story is Leone Janssen who was came here because she had tuberculosis and she had been also had they say an acquaintance with a bellboy at another hotel. And while she was staying here she found out she was not going to ever find a cure. She was upset about that, upset about the the gentleman friend not you know returning her affections. So she climbed to the roof of the San Carlos was shortly after it opened up and dived to her death right on the corner of Monroe and Central Avenue.

Kaila: I found an article The Arizona Republic published on May 8, 1928 titled “Woman Takes Own Life By Seven-Story Leap From Hotel San Carlos.” It said Leone was about 25 years old and from California. She jumped from the roof of the Hotel San Carlos shortly before 3 a.m. Quote, “A guest of the hotel, rooming on a top floor, told of hearing a scream as Miss Jensen’s body hurtled through the air.”

Debe: So they say her spirit still lingers in the hotel and they see her wandering the halls, smell her perfumes.

Katie: And she’s not the only one here.

[\[SFX of children running and laughing\]](#)

Debe: [00:08:15] And then the ghosts of the children of course because that was the site of Phoenix's first school. So they do hear children running in hallways when there's no children even checked into the building. [00:08:26] [11.0] [\[SFX of kids running and playing\]](#)

[sad tones fade out]

2: ORPHEUM THEATRE

Katie: Then we pulled up to the Orpheum Theatre, which is easy to spot with its brightly lit, red marquee on the corner of Second Avenue and Adams Street.

Bus Clip 3 0:03 Marshall - So I mean the Orpheum dates back to a point where we would have had many grand theatres here in phoenix; sadly, this is the only one left. We had the Fox, the Strand, a whole host of other kind of grand theaters and this one we almost lost as well but the city of phoenix did decide it was worth saving and preserving. It is now a theatre where they have a variety of things. In fact, I see you can come and see SpongeBob the musical. Wooh doesn’t that sound like a hoot of a time? (crowd groans)

Kaila: The Orpheum Theatre is one of the most elegant and classic buildings in downtown Phoenix. It was built in 1929 and is the city’s only remaining theater built before World War II. Its architecture is Spanish Colonial Revival, which means it’s covered in intricate murals and moldings. I love its red velvet seats.

Debe: [00:20:03] Theater ghosts you know they like to perform. [Music: [“Under the Bed”](#) - Spooky a Capella vocal group] You know in their past lives you know and they were great performers so they keep coming back for that. You know that curtain call. I know there is a ghost a call either Maggie or Maddie depending on who it is and she sits at the back of the theater. She's all decked out in like a big ‘Hello Dolly’ hat nice clothing. One of the members of my paranormal team was there for a performance and was going back during the intermission

saw this woman standing back there - we do a lot of reenactments down at the cemetery - she was wondering where she got that costuming where she got that hat and she approached the woman to ask her. She just vanished before her eyes. They don't know who she is but they see here quite often in the theater. She probably was a- an avid theater goer so she's still coming to the shows. [00:21:03][59.7]

Kaila: Since the Orpheum is the most easily accessible of all the spots, I asked Debe what someone can do if they want to meet this ghost.

Debe: [00:35:42] Go to a performance go to a performance go a little early so you have time to kind of walk around in the corridors and you know just say you know 'I'm here I'm admiring the theater. If there's anybody here that has a message for me you know let me know. Can you tell me a special place I should sit.' Just talk them like you're visiting somebody at the theater. And when they have there they do do tours there a few times usually during the holiday, go on the tours because they'll take you behind the scenes and behind the stage in areas you don't get to go to when you're going there for performance. Find a seat study the stage. Turn around and see if that lady with the hat sitting in the back and have your camera ready. [00:36:29] [46.7]

[a capella singing fades out]

PLACE: THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Katie: Next up was the First Baptist Church is at Third Avenue and Monroe Street, around the corner from the popular concert venue The Van Buren. It was built in 1929, and was known for its Italian Gothic architecture and bell tower. But in 1984, a fire decimated the building.

Clip 3 - 6:16 Marshall – “The reason we are here is actually the rectory right next door where the priest would have lived.”

Debe: [00:22:25] There was a artists who took residence in the old pastor's residential area [Music: "[Lullaby Lights](#)" - "Mysterious, childish and magical with digital vibraphone"] and he had big plans for it. He was going to do his studio work there it was. He wanted to open it up for others for displays. And while he was in there looking through the cubby holes of things in his area where he was working he was up on a ladder [[SFX climbing ladder](#)] poking around looked down and apparently he saw a little girl with curls. He says it might a bit of Shirley Temple standing there in a nice little dress patent leather shoes. She looked up at him he looked down at her and then she suddenly vanish. He doesn't know who that was either whether it was a little girl who belonged to the church at one time maybe her funeral was held there and at one time

there was a mortuary right next store. Her spirit could have wandered over there to the church to see what was going on that particular day. [00:23:37][71.9]

Kaila: After the fire, some wanted the building demolished. But Terry Goddard, who was Phoenix mayor at the time, saved it and has spent decades trying to bring it new life. He was recently part of a team that renovated the building, ensuring our little Shirley Temple has a home to haunt for decades to come.

[music fades out]

PLACE: PIONEER AND MILITARY MEMORIAL PARK

Katie: The last place we stopped was the Pioneer and Military Memorial Park at 15th Avenue and Jefferson Street.

Bus clip 5 - 12:38 - Marshall: This cemetery is really the reason why I started doing this tour, because it's right in the middle of downtown so close to the capitol and so many folks don't know its here.

Katie: It's a group of cemeteries that were built around 1884. Debe volunteers at this park.

[Music: "[Tales of Everlasting Winter](#)" - Melancholic and lyrical cello melody over a graceful and mysterious orchestra. Piano, harp, celesta, glockenspiel, strings.]

Katie: Marshall said the most famous person buried here is Jacob Waltz, also known as the Lost Dutchman. Waltz was a prospector and farmer who was rumored to have a bunch of gold stashed in a mine in the Superstition Mountains. People *still* go searching for the gold but have never found it. Or, I guess, admitted to finding it.

Debe: [00:14:29] The cemetery although you know cemeteries get the stigma of being spooky haunted places. It's a very peaceful cemetery. And even though the fact that it's buried over an old Hohokam village and over and over and old Hohokam cemetery and so you've got a kind of a double whammy there. But they're just happy where they're taking care of the cemetery. So there's no spirits in cemetery. They always go is that cemetery downtown by the state capitol haunted? And I'll say not you know in a nice way in a nice way. They're happy we're taking care of it. [00:15:05][36.4]

[music fades out]

ENDING

Katie: Not every presence is a bad thing. Debe said that she's felt energies in old mansions around town, like the Rosson House in Heritage Square or the Shackelford House.

[Music: "[Neverland](#)" - Magical and questioning. Piano, glockenspiel, synth pads, chime tree, cymbals and toms.]

Debe: [00:10:25] It's all happy energy that have remained behind in the homes because these were like the mansions of the day you know the beautiful homes and the people cherished their memories there. And I think they come back because they're happy there. The buildings are still existing and there are people using them you know to this day and sharing the memories.
[00:10:47][21.8]

Kaila: I asked Debe why Arizona specifically would tend to have such happy ghosts.

Debe: [00:16:25] They lived in adobes in the beginning of Phoenix's history. They lived in a little wooden shacks. So we know when they when the wives started finally coming out from the east they wanted things to look a little bit more Victorian and nice like they had it. So they insisted that their husbands build them a nice home with a brick or stone or ring in the fine Woods from some of the other areas. So they were proud. They were very proud of their new life. They were very proud of their new home their children you know or the same way. They were happy to be in their new location. And so they you know they see a lot of the children's energy [SFX of kids laughing] in these buildings still to this day. I know they hear kids running up and down stairs [[SFX of kids running stairs](#)], they'll hear giggling. So they were happy here in their new environment.

Kaila: I also asked Debe if she's ever heard of demons or bad energies in metro Phoenix.

Debe: [00:33:18] Not in metro Phoenix. I think for the majority it's been pretty pretty calm in the hauntings here. I have never seen or heard anything bad downtown. Luckily (giggles) [00:33:33][14.7]

[music fades out]

Kaila: If you're not satisfied with that, Debe says there are places across Arizona with a higher spook factor.

[Music: "[Old Times](#)" - Sneaky and mischievous electric guitar ripples and glides in dream-like repetition.]

Debe: [00:33:37] In Arizona, some of the mining towns can get a little rough because that's how they lived and died. And it's again it's just mostly you might get you know shoved a little bit. Or you'll hear you know some profanity when you're doing your recordings. But generally you know they're not out there to harm you. They're here. They're out there to you know maybe tease you a little bit or you know, if there's children ghosts they like to poke you or hide things from you so you might put your equipment down and turn

around and go, 'Well I know I had my bag over here how did it end up over here' you know. So they do. They're more like prankster ghosts in Arizona. [00:34:25][48.2]

OUTRO

Katie: Well Valley 101 listeners, that's it for today, although maybe you'll have some lingering or haunting thoughts about this episode. Share it with us on Twitter @valley101pod.

Kaila: And if you want more images or behind the scenes tales from what we learned on our haunted tour, you can subscribe to our newsletter. Visit valley101newsletter.azcentral.com to sign up and get our free email every week delivered to your inbox.

Katie: I'm Katie O'Connell signing off for today.

Kaila: And I'm Kaila White. Thank you for listening to Valley 101, a podcast from The Arizona Republic and azcentral.com. See you next week.